

The Mountains of Einarr

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Summary: Seven years after Hiccup met Toothless, he has left the days of Berk behind him. Since then he's become a father to a son he adores and founded a happy new life. But he can't hide from his old life forever. When old enemies exploit his new weaknesses will he be able to save both his tribe and what makes his life worth living?

1. Scars

****Hey guys! Thanks so much for reading! I usually put warnings up here but language is all I got. And technically major character death, but SPOILERS- all I can do is say prepare yourselves for feels. :D****

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****Chapter One ****

_Scars _

****xXXx ****

Astrid Hofferson slings her leather satchel over her shoulder, her lovely features twisting in discomfort as she feels the age old ache in her shoulder complain with the usual wave of pain. True, the injury becomes more manageable as the years pass, but she knows that it will never truly heal; that with age, her shoulder will grow worse and her axe wielding days will eventually end. But even with that grim inevitability hanging over her, she still trains hard and fast, honing her skills in battle to the point that she can throw an axe almost twenty feet and send it fast and hard into the skull of any enemy who dares cross her path.

Which makes it all the more unfortunate when someone angers the young Viking. Her temper has grown with her age, and her restraint only

stretches as far as her patience. At the brave, strong age of twenty one she has accumulated quite a reputation for herself. She dons the scars and medals of bravery with pride and honor, and they say how she fights in battle makes even the goddess Freya halt the winds, enthralled and proud of the young warrior's prowess in the field. She has long known her duties in her Viking tribe, and to some she is the very embodiment of true female Viking, a strong and noble woman who'd go to where the sea falls off the Earth to defend her land, people, and freedom.

But at this particular moment in time, Astrid doesn't feel noble, prestigious, or even strong. Quite the contrary, she feels cranky, tired, and most of all irritated.

She told Stoick one hundred times, damn it, she does not want to go on the trip to Einarr! She has training here, responsibilities to the tribe- surely the Chief was of stable enough mind to realize what a foolhardy thing it would be to leave the tribe alone for two weeks in the hands of Gobber and Fishlegs. Sure they were brilliant men and Vikings, capable of watching over the tribe and orchestrating daily duties, but if Berk were to fall under siege while they were away- Astrid shudders at the thought.

This is so obviously a bad idea, but she knows better than to contradict the Chief, especially to his face. He might be getting a little grey around the beard, but Stoick the Vast is just as strong, hardy, and well, vast, as ever. Astrid and the Chieftain are on considerably good terms, as he respects her greatly and values her loyalty and contributions to the tribe. In return for her years of service his ear is always open to her sage advice and he has helped her fend off a few suitors or two as the years pass. Yet even with their friendship, he's their Chief and what he says goes- and that's that.

Thor, how that irks her.

It's enough that she has to abandon her beloved Berk for two weeks, but that she has to sail to Einarr- that tall, forestless mound of Earth that's so wretchedly boring and out of the way that the very thought of remaining there for two weeks has her itching to throw something- is the salt on the proverbial slug.

It's so tame there she wonders why people hadn't thrown themselves on their own swords to starve off their own boredom.

"Astrid!"

The loud, deep call tugs her attention from her grim thoughts and she turns from the blue, whispering sea that had held her gaze to view a tall, muscular, overbearing man with long black hair and a surplus of charcoal facial hair. A cocksure smile has wormed across his face and his grey blue eyes glint in a self-described "dangerous" way that Astrid knew was only childish mischief.

"Snotlout," she greets, her voice less enthusiastic than his. His smile does not waver however, and her heart sinks just a little more in her chest when she realizes this trip will be made with the incorrigible Hooligan heir. It isn't that she doesn't like Snotlout, after so many years of fighting and working together it was damn near impossible not to befriend him, and as much as she would rather bite

her tongue off than admit it...he's a decent fighter and a good Viking. And can be a nice guy if he tries.

Really, really hard.

But just because age had matured his mind doesn't mean he wasn't the most annoying, antagonist, _arrogant _Viking alive.

"Ready for two weeks with Berk's most eligible bachelor?" he asks brazenly, hitching up a coal eyebrow moronically.

"Oh how my heart swoons," the blonde Viking replies, voice oozing with teasing sarcasm. They snort in unison and he readjusts his bag on his shoulders.

"This is going to be _so _boring," Snotlout groans, and Astrid agrees emphatically with a vehement bob of the head. She picks up her bag of weaponry from the dewed ground and falls into step next to Snotlout as they make the descent down Berk's hills towards the docks. "Why can't we go somewhere exciting? Like Bezerk Island or Visithug Isle. Do you know how long it's been since I even fought a Visithug?"

Astrid rolls her eyes at her friend's bloodlust, but she smiles empathetically and shifts her jaw in thought. "Oh, Thor...probably not since-

"Since the Battle of Bloody Stars, Astrid! That was nearly two years ago, and I've been itching to run my sword through a fat Visithug belly ever since then! It's about time they get a taste of me...once I'm Chief, the first thing I'm gonna do is sail over to their territories and lay waste to every inch of the land, make them rue the day they ever crossed the Hooligan tribe!"

"I look forward to it," Astrid says, her voice quiet and simply numb. His words have triggered a memory, brushed a wound in her chest and automatically her body tenses as if to defend herself from the pain of such a memory. She instantly shoves the emotions and memories away, and soon it's all gone again, safe and locked up in that box in her head, leaving only one scrap, one thought remaining.

_He would have never done that. _

Astrid straightens her shoulders, grinding her teeth and walking faster. Snotlout continues to yammer on about how he will be the Visithug scourge and how it will honor the tribe and blahblahblah. She's angry at herself now- usually she was better at keeping thoughts like those in check. Father of Odin, it's been almost _seven _years. A long time ago. She's better than this, stronger than this.

She resolves to find a distraction. Immediately, she finds one.

Racing forward, her satchel drops from her shoulder to the friend as something snaps inside her chest. Fire boiling to the surface, she shoots out a hand and grips the the old man forcefully by the collar of his dirty shirt and yanks him where he see the utter rage blazing in her eyes.

"MILDEW!" she barks forcefully, teeth baring. The old man starts and the scrolls he'd been holding fell the ground in a mad shower, sending them rolling across the grassy hillside. He grunts hoarsely and he stares back into the blond woman's eyes with grey orbs squinting and cold.

"Astrid," he purrs, his voice scratchy and deep like sand is caught in his long, grey throat. "How are you this fine cold morning?"

"How many times, Mildew?" she questions loudly, voice brimming with rage. "How many times have I told you to stop spreading this garbage around?" She hears Snotlout come up behind her but she's so angrily fixed on the disgusting old man in front of her she pays him no mind.

"I have been told to stop pasting it on houses, nothing more," the old man spat, yet his demeanor remained infuriatingly calm. "I am in full rights to pass along the word to anyone who wishes to listen."

"As if anyone would want to listen to your filth," snarled Astrid derisively. "The dragons are a part of our life now, you great codfish, and I'm fed up with your constant attempts to undermine what-"

Her voice cuts off sharply, her breath shooting out of her nostrils in a huff, and she reels herself back in before she says the name. Mildew cocks his grizzled head, a mockingly pitying expression sliding over his ugly mug.

"What...who did?" he leers, voice rising in pitch as his tone is overcome by scorn. "Who, Ms. Hofferson? You can't even say his name, can you?"

For a split second, she freezes into ice and even Snotlout tenses behind her. The brief, consoling image of Astrid's ankle hatchet buried inches deep in the old git's skull fleets across her vision. But then she breathes. Immediately, Astrid continues as if she had never paused and as if Mildew never said a thing.

"-what we have spend so long in achieving. We finally are at peace with the dragons, and after years and years of bloodshed we finally have them on our side. Threatening what we have with them is a very, very foolish mistake on your part." She more or less shoves the Mildew away from her, disgust evident on her face. He stumbles slightly backwards and shoots her a look that would curdle yak's milk as he stoops to scoop up his yellowing scrolls.

"You're all fooling yourselves," he snarls. "The dragons cannot live in peace forever! It's not in their nature! They're beasts, animals, bloodthirsty monsters- and without Stoick's br-"

"What do you think we should do if he finishes that sentence?" a loud voice proclaims.

"I don't know, something involving pain," another similar voice replies. There's a resulting smack that could only be the sound of a fist slamming into an open palm.

"Yeah, that sounds good. Blood too. Lots of it. We need a sword. A

big one."

"Two big swords. And a really big rock."

The twins emerge cheerfully from the nearby tavern, eager grins on their faces but cold lights in their eyes. Ruffnut is currently cracking her knuckles while Tuffnut pops his neck, rolling around his shoulders in preparation for a good brawl. Unfortunately for Mildew, he's not a very formidable opponent. He remains calm though, the only sign of his worry the bulging vein at his left temple.

Ruffnut brushes her long blonde bangs from her face, readjusting her helmet while Tuffnut strokes his short beard with a smirk. They approach the pathetic old Viking and oh-so subtly ram into him, knocking the scrolls yet again from his arms.

"Oops. Sorry about that."

"I'm not." Tuff bends down and picks up a scroll, unrolling it quickly. His eyes pass over it with a distasteful expression. "Typical dragon hating cow dung."

"You can read it?" Ruff asked, raising a blonde eyebrow doubtfully with poorly concealed awe.

"Nah," her brother replies instantly, chucking it over his shoulder and nearly hitting Snotlout in the face. "I just know."

Ruff nods and shrugs, taking care to step on each fallen scroll as she made her way over to Snotlout and Astrid. "Heading out for Snoozeville?" she asks with a crooked grin. Tuff falls beside her after giving the grumbling, retreating Mildew an antagonistic smile.

Astrid sighs deeply and nods. "Unfortunately."

"Have fun dying of boredom. Me and Tuff are gonna go deep sea fishing later, then go practice. Sucks you won't be here to witness our mad skills."

"My heart bleeds," Snotlout muttered.

Tuff frowned. "You should get that looked at or something." His sister punched him in the arm, rolling her blue eyes. "What?"

"He didn't mean his heart was bleeding you idiot, it was sarcasm."

"I know you told me about this before, but I still have no idea what that is."

Even as adults, the twins were still as empty headed as ever. Upon spending more time with Astrid, though, Ruff learns more everyday. Unluckily for Tuff that leaves him with Snotlout and Fishlegs, the latter of which bores him with such big words that he zones out every time the guy opens his mouth. And Snotlout is well...Snotlout.

"Honestly, how are you two even alive?" Snotlout complains, good-naturedly considering the rude Viking in

question.

"Um...probably our helmets. And our swords. And our dragon." Ruff scratches her head. "And...food? Water, I guess?"

"Never mind, forget I asked," the older Viking muttered under his breath. He gestured to the docks. "We better get going before I change my mind and have Hookfang fly me there."

"Oh, Thor, I wish I could just ride Stormfly there..." Astrid says wistfully. It would be faster, easier, more comfortable, definitely more fun...

...but Einarr has a strict no dragon policy, being a neutral island in the Peaceworthy Archipelago. They are under strict orders from Stoick to keep their dragons here and overall not mention them while in trade talks with the Chieftain of Einarr. It's a good precaution, one that Astrid understands, but that doesn't mean she has to like it.

The Berk horn blows through the air, signalling that the first ship, Stoick's choice vessel, is departing. Jerking downwards and scooping up her bag, she and Snotlout shout out goodbyes to the twins before racing down the long boarded bridge hugging the side of their mountain that leads down to the docks. Their booted feet slam hard across the firm, dark wood and within a minute they're hopping onboard "The Lucky Peregrine" and tucking their belongings with the provisions.

On their ship they're joined by two other superior vikings, Ivar and Rudefyst, both around twenty years their senior, and Astrid's relieved that the ship won't be that crowded, saved for all those who volunteered to row. The day and a half journey wouldn't be very enjoyable (not that she expected it to be) if she was surrounded on all sides by sweaty hairy men with scarce air to breathe. But that was going to happen anyway.

Snotlout unties the ship from its post and Ivar takes up the orders, while Rudefyst takes account of what little provisions they need and what weapons they have in the slim chance of attack from pirates or rival tribes- tribe relations had gotten more and more tense in the past five years, enough to rile up worries whenever unfamiliar ships are seen. And while Vikings always enjoy a good fight and are very easily provoked, being at war with everyone is not the way to go about things, not if you want your tribe to survive the season.

Vikings are known even better for attacking their enemies at random, after an unresolved fight or dispute from decades ago resurfaces with a vengeance, often out of the blue.

They're notorious for holding grudges.

As Astrid leans onto the starboard side of the ship, her crystal blue eyes search the seas for the dull island she knows she won't see for a long while, her expression drawn and tired. The residual anger from Mildew's idiocy has tired her and dredged up old emotions she wishes would just stay gone. It's been such a long time. Surely the pain should fade after the memories do.

But just like her shoulder wound, the hurt just never goes away.

xXXx

Hiccup had been having a pretty good day until he heard some unfortunate news. In fact, it had been slightly atypical in its luckiness- making it all the more shocking that his old tribe was coming to visit his new home.

The first sign of a good day was when he woke up this morning had been the lack of aches and pains in his body. As he approached the age of twenty one, battle scars began to ache more and phantom pains began to grip his missing leg at times, albeit rarely. Today, on this early fall morning, he woke up feeling refreshed, young, undoubtedly twenty.

What would have seen out of place and odd in the cozy twenty year old's cottage, what was the most wonderful thing in Hiccup's life, was the source of his good mood. That wasn't new however, because the beautiful thing that kept the depression and sad days away and that filled his life with joy did so _every _day. After dragging himself out of bed with a little more energy than usual, Hiccup swept upstairs quickly and quietly- taking care not to hit the wooden stairs too loud with his prosthetic leg- into the small upper bedroom. With a sneaky smile spreading across his handsome face, he crept up to the tiny bed where a sleeping form snored softly under wool sheets.

Feeling the beginnings of laughter bubble up in his chest, he clapped one hand over his mouth and leaned very close to the shaggy brown mop of hair poking out of the blankets and let his breath tickle the tiny pale ear that was barely visible through the longish, soft hair.

"August," he whispered playfully, his voice a gentle croon. "Oh, Auuuuuuuust...wakey wakey..."

The soft resulting moan nearly made Hiccup laugh as the boy shifted just slightly under the covers. "August," he said again, voice slightly louder. "What are you doing, sleepy head? Wake up, you've been asleep a looong time. You're gonna sleep through your biiirthdaaaaay..."

There was a sudden gasp as covers flew up in Hiccup's face, and the small boy shot straight up in bed with an amusing mixture of horror and annoyance on his sweet face.

"I not sweep that long!" he cried, soft voice thick with sleep. "Wiar, I not sweep days! 'Morrow's m'birfday, I not miss!" He looked at Hiccup accusingly with green eyes wide, his statement almost a demand for confirmation. Hiccup allowed himself to finally laugh, sending waves of deep chuckles through his shoulders.

"That's right, August." he said when he could breathe, ruffling the boy's soft chocolate hair. "How old are you going to be?" Despite his initial irritation the three year old giggled and snatched Hiccup's hand, giving it a firm tug. The Viking laughed again and let the child manipulate his long, slender fingers until August waved Hiccup's hand.

"Four! I be four!" he proclaimed, and indeed Hiccup's hand held up four fingers. Wiggling his fingers, he tickled the boy's face. While August giggled, the older Viking smiled warmly and immediately scooped August up while he was still laughing, making the child gasp breathlessly and laugh even harder.

"You are the smartest Viking in the whole wide world, you know that?" Hiccup told him, nuzzling his nose to the boy's soft cheek.

"Not smarter van you!" the youth shouted empathically, making Hiccup wince exaggeratedly as the shout penetrated his eardrums. August turned pink and giggled, pressing his little hands to his mouth. "Oops." He grinned, then leaned close to Hiccup's ear.

"Daddy's smawtest, bestest Wiking," he whispered happily, burrowing into Hiccup's warm neck and tickling him with his soft cheeks and hair. Hiccup felt his heart grow four times bigger in his chest, sending warmth and adoration through his whole body.

"Just wait and see," Hiccup said, kneeling down and placing August on the bed. He remained there, brushing the boy's long hair out of his eyes. "When you grow up, you're going to be the strongest, smartest, most amazing hero Viking in the whole world and one day you'll be the best Viking King ever."

The child gaped at him, eyes bright with feverish delight. Hiccup can almost hear his thoughts. _Viking King. Wow. _"Reawwy?" he whispered, looking around as if it was a big secret.

"I know it," his father promised, and he stood up again after carding his fingers again through the stunned little boy's hair. "Time to get changed. This is your last day as three years old, it has to be special, don't you think!"

August leapt to his feet, immediately pouncing on his sheets. "Yes yes yes!" he cried joyously, before leaping off the small bed and scampering over to the wicker basket that held all of his clothes. Disentangled from the bed sheets, it was visible how small and scrawny the boy was, and Hiccup shook his head in empathy. August reminded him so much of himself, it was amazing- he even looked like him. Longish brown hair that fell all over the place (although August's was darker while Hiccup's was reddish) and thin frame and green eyes (but Hiccup's were brighter while his were a deep, forest green).

But most of all, the boy was so very smart. He said his first words at eight months, and he was fully walking at nine. At almost four, he already knows how to read, do a little math. While he was still working on baby talk, August understood large words that would stump most of the adults around him- mostly because Viking diction only goes so far as "kill" or "dragon" or "warrior" and Hiccup is no ordinary parent. And to be honest, August was just so damn cute with his baby talk sometimes that Hiccup couldn't stand the thought of him growing out of it.

Watching for a couple moments as the boy wiggled out of his night clothes and picked up his leggings and dark blue shirt, Hiccup gave him a proud smile and made his way back downstairs, calling to August that porridge will be done soon.

Thirty minutes later, after some goading for August to finish his porridge because it wouldn't hurt for him to put on some more weight, they headed out into the cool morning air. There was a storm on the way, you could smell it in the greying air hours off, but it was not wintry and not severe- plus they needed one last rain before the rain turned to ice. Hiccup knew of harsh winters well, what with growing up on Berk, and this storm would not be nearly as bad as a Berk thunderstorm- Thor would not strike here tonight. Another good sign.

The morning was quiet and calm, as usual, but a few of the early birds waved hello to the Thorburns, as they were so called- as Hiccup couldn't very well go around as Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, son of Stoick the Vast and heir to the Hairy Hooligan tribe if he wanted to live in this peaceful life.

No, he'd been known as Hiccup Thorburn for a long time.

Hiccup Thornburn, the blacksmith, and his son August, had an almost picturesque life here on the mountains of Einarr, where it was cool all year and often cloudy, where crops grew well and instead of craggy and rough the mountains were smooth and palest green. Nestled securely in the Peaceworthy Archipelago, the ex-heir couldn't imagine a safer, better place to raise a son, and he was happier than he ever imagined he could be.

He made his way to his forge and shop with the little August on his shoulders, waving and greeting all he saw and inhaling the crisp October air with reverence. A lot of people thought he was odd, with the way he seemed so mindlessly content with the otherwise boring atmosphere of Einarr, but they didn't know where he hailed from and they didn't understand how he appreciated the beauty of the landscape. It was always safe here, and that's what Hiccup wanted. There were no hardcore Vikings, no enemies, no swords, no spears, no...dragons.

No. No dragons at all.

There was already a customer waiting at his door, a good man by the name of Neilin. Yet another good sign. "Good day, Neilin!" he greeted amiably, and August chirruped a mindlessly adorable "hewwo" from Hiccup's head, making the older Vikings chuckle heartily.

"Thor, that kid will stay cute until he's old and wrinkly like me," Neilin chortled, and Hiccup's eyes sparkled as though it was a personal compliment. Bobbing a head and making August giggle hysterically and clutch Hiccup's shaggy head as though he'd fall, he unlocked his door and opened up his shop, letting Neilin go inside first. Then he lowered August down to the grassy Earth and led him inside.

"What can I do for you, Neilin?" he asked, pushing back his curtains to let grey air pour into the darkened shop. Turning away briefly, he asked August, "Could you find Daddy's flint and steel for me? I'm going to light some candles." The boy nodded a shaggy head, sending his bangs tumbling into his eyes, and scurried over to a shelf full of his father's tools. The shelf was surrounded by many others, all adorned with tons of various tools, strips of leather, baskets of coal, an anvil, and many flints...his father was not the conventional

blacksmith. Instead of swords and weaponry, Hiccup made prosthetic body parts, door hinges, buckets, farming tools- anything you could think of, Hiccup could and would make it. Aside from weapons, those he refused to do unless at his last resort.

The old man raked his hand through his silver beard. "Well, I was wondering if you could construct a better harness for my horses. This is the final harvest until winter arrives and the crops die, so time is not on our side. Just as I was beginning to harvest my barley, my ox harness snapped." The man extracted the broken leather strapped, expression grim. "I assume it's fixable."

"Of course, Neilin. I'll have this fixed and returned to you by the end of the day- and probably in better shape than before." He gave the man a reassuring smile, and turned again in time to see August hurried back over to him and hand him his flint and steel.

"Thank you, August," he said warmly, stooping and taking the tools gently with a hand. Then he shook Neilin's hand with his other, the man gave him a hurried but heartfelt thank you.

"Thank you, Hiccup! I'll see you at the meeting tonight!" He made to leave but Hiccup started, making him pause.

"Meeting?" Hiccup asked confusedly but quickly to catch him. His eyebrow raises at the new information.

"Aye, haven't you heard? Groups of a tribe are coming soon to discuss trade and Erik's going to enforce our neutrality again."

"I..see. The trade news is a good thing," he replied, but tensed at the idea of another tribe coming here. Almost subconsciously, his eyes flickered to August, who was playing with a small iron doll Hiccup had made for him on his second birthday. For a second he felt sick. He knew how barbaric a tribe could be...and this was the Peaceworthy Archipelago for a reason. They didn't take sides, and they much preferred to stay out of the way. "Hope Erik convinces them for good this time."

"I do too," Neilin muttered, shaking his head. His shoulders sag wearily, all of the sudden looking older. If Hiccup had had a mirror, he would have seen his face age similarly. "I'm tired of all the warring tribes, it's bloody madness sometimes. We live here to be separate from all the vicious bloodshed."

"I know." He paused, scrubbing his face with a palm. "Neilin, you don't happen to know which tribe is coming, do you?"

"Aye, that I do- it's the Hairy Hooligan tribe, from Berk! Hiccup, I must be going- thanks again!"

The old Viking hurried off, leaving Hiccup staring after him with mouth slack and eyes wide.

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****Thanks so much for reading- and would you look at that, there's a review box right there! Please tell me what you think of this so far. As both a person and a writer, feedback means a lot to me. Thanks!
XD****

2. Trouble Brewing

****HI GUYS!** This chapter is shorter than the first, but it is so fluffy I'm gonna die. :D I do love a good fluff chapter, but you also gain a little insight (like, a little bit, a tiny glimpse) into Hiccup's sad backstory while Astrid and Stoick get closer and closer to Einarr. YUS. Please, read and review, but thanks for reading anyway! XD**

****XXXXXXXX****

****Chapter Two ****

Trouble Brewing

****xXXx****

"Odin's beard, is that a storm?" a young Viking asks aloud and unhappily, jabbing a meaty finger at the grey sky. In the distance, miles away, there's a curtain of ashy clouds piling and growing, creeping towards them like a predator. Astrid looks to where the Viking points and her first feeling is that of dread. Storms, aside from water dragons, are a sailor's worst nightmare. They're fast and cruel, vicious with the rage of Thor; they toss the cold seas and drag ships upon ships down, stealing lives and dragging souls into the watery depths with no chance of survival. There's no choice but to ride out storms, as you can't outrun them and you can't fight them. You can only survive them. Even a dragon rider is powerless in a good storm.

Relief pools in her stomach however upon smelling the air and feeling the soft wind blow her blonde hair around her face. Years of living on Berk has sharpened her keen storm senses. Big, long...but not severe. No wrath of Thor tonight. But naturally, the feeling of absolute ease eludes her. Rain is rain and rain causes waves, waves cause bigger waves and bigger waves cause capsizes. Capsizes cause sinking ships, and sinking ships cause loss of life. Simple progression.

Rudefyst tuts at the view of the rolling wall of ashen clouds crawling towards them, but he doesn't look too worried. Being more experienced than anyone onboard, he orders them to row faster, shaving off time to endure the storm shelterless on the sea to reach Einarr. The sailors eagerly comply, anxious to make headway. Stoick's ship is still in full view, and Astrid watches as they similarly pick up pace and through the wind and the sounds of the ocean she can hear Stoick's loud and angry yells travel through the air. She smiles briefly to herself, and finds herself looking out at sea again to catch a glimpse of the most boring island in all the world.

Einarr. _

Ha.

Einarr had been named because of its appearance, and for nothing other than that. That was not out of the ordinary. It was the fact that the name meant "a lone soldier" that it was ironic. Ironic because, sure it may look foreboding, with its lustrous yet sharp

mountains that grasp the sky, with sword shaped land and powerful blockade of other islands surrounding it. It's ironic to Astrid mostly because it's in the dead center of the Peaceworthy Archipelago without a single warmongering man on its earth, and that the sword shaped "lone soldier" is the calmest, most boring place in the world.

She can't imagine going there for two weeks, let alone living there. Astrid was born for fighting and training and battle, born to defend and conquer with fire in her heart and a wicked smile on her face. She was made for this, _made _for the life she so valiantly led.

She can't even grasp the concept of such a simple life.

She understands the purpose of this trip is to secure a good source of trade (Trader Yohann just doesn't cut it sometimes) for a stable source of food and resources. But another reason is Stoick very much wants to convince the Peaceworthy Archipelago's Chieftain, Erik Bjorkson, that they should sway from their neutral status and ally with the Hairy Hooligans (the nearest Viking tribe) before either are attacked by a rival force. Stoick is aware of the alliances the Archipelago has with _all _tribes, but Erik and Stoick have been good friends for a long time, or so Astrid has heard. She for one, can't understand how one can stand idly by while your friend is in danger of attack and destruction. Doesn't seem very loyal.

_But betraying all other alliances isn't loyal either, _a voice in her head remarks, and she has to agree.

They have sailed all night, and the moon and stars are hidden behind thick clouds. The grows black and the horizon melts into the sky as the world darkens to nothing, lit only by the barest of light passing through the thick layer of clouds overhead. Soon her eyes hurt for looking for the shadow of the tall island and she turns from the sea and the sky to massage her temples. Snotlout tosses a moleskin bag at her full of freshwater with a supercilious grin, and she shoots him a dirty glare and chugs the water eagerly, relishing the way it soothes her irritated, dry throat. She pauses and simply inhales, enjoying the way the fresh water smelled versus the salty sea brine and the equally as salty man sweat. Then she reseals it and passes it down the line of rowers.

Then she leans back, arms crossed, and lets the swaying of the tide rock her into oblivion.

xxx

"Daddy?"

Fire.

Berk is on fire.

There's flames everywhere. He's running, faster than he ever has before with heart pounding like a hammer. His face is burning, his lungs seem to shrink in his chest. He can't breathe, the smoke is choking him- yet he still races on, face twisted in desperation.

No, no, no. _The word is a mantra in his ears, incessant and

borderline hysterical. _No, no. _The name's on his lips, but he doesn't have the oxygen to scream it like he so wildly wants to. The ground is hot, the flames arch from the burning houses like bright, scalding fingers to grab him and roast him. Sweat pours down his flushed face as he runs up that rocky, familiar, throat raw and eyes watering._

"Hiccup, no!"

The voice, so familiar and deep and so full of urgency almost makes him turn. Almost. He ignores it, powers on, and when he reaches the top he nearly collapses from exhaustion but he doesn't.

Doesn't because he can't.

He can't stop, he has to reach-

Through the smoke and flames and screaming he hears that wild, agonized cry and suddenly Hiccup's screaming too, screaming and screaming until his lungs give out and he can't stop running, he has to get to him, he has to, but he can't-

- stop -

-screaming.

"Daddy!"

"Toothless!" Hiccup yells, jarring awake and nearly knocking the boy on top of him off the bed as his whole body jerks. Gasping and sweating, he struggles to catch his breath as the sight of his son slowly enters his wild perception in the dark room. At first all he sees is black, black, and a small shadow looming over him and he leans backwards into the headboard. The boy grips his father's sheets tightly to keep from flying off, forest green eyes wide with fear.

"Daddy," the shadow breathes, voice demurely timid. "You 'wake?"

"A-August?" he stammers confusedly, wiping the sweat from his brow. His eyes adjust and he clumsily uses the flint and steel next to his bed to light a candle. There's a blossoming of warm light and suddenly he sees the fluid flame of the candle flickering in a pretty, wide pair of green eyes. He leans up in bed, feeling his heart pounding in his chest and his lungs burning with a phantom blaze. The residual desperation and hysteria makes him shake beneath his sheets, and he inhales a deep breath. Struggling to regain his composure, he grabs the boy gently by the arms. "August, what are you doing in here? Why aren't you in bed?"

"H-Heard you. Yewwing," his son whispers worriedly, his eyes glistening with concern. The light makes the concern on the young boy's face all the more saddening. He worms his way into his father's arms, snuggling in his father's warmth and ignorant of how Hiccup sweats and trembles- or maybe not. "Have bad dweam, Daddy?"

"Oh, August," Hiccup breathes despondently, voice low. It wasn't fair he had to see his father like this. "I'm sorry I woke you up."

"S'okay, Daddy," August replies quietly. "Bad dreams always mean." The child's eyes close as he listens to his father's slowing heartbeat, and Hiccup rubs his back methodically. The gesture comforts them both.

"Yeah. But I've got my big man to save me from them, don't I?" He gives his son a watery smile, but to his horror his eyes prick with tears. Luckily, August's eyes are closed. With a free hand, Hiccup rapidly wipes his face to clear whatever evidence of grief remain there. _Thor, this can't be happening. _

He hadn't dreamed that nightmare since August came into his life. Not once. Why the sudden comeback?

He doesn't have to think twice. The memories that Neilin had brought to the surface upon telling him that his old tribe were coming here were enough to make him close up early, rushing to finish the harness and occupying himself and his mind with nothing but work and August before he started panicking and sinking back into the memories of the life that he had run away from almost seven years ago.

He'd had a long time to heal from that day. But how it'd haunted him, long after the the gaping maw of grief had faded to a small hole that still whistled when the wind blew, sending shivers down his spine. Before August, Hiccup had been so plagued with the nightmares that sleep had been feared as much as craved. Even as he overcame the initial agony and the loss, pieces of his heart still lingered in Berk...with the friends and family he'd left there with the everything else.

After all this time.

"Daddy?"

August's tiny voice brings Hiccup back, refocusing his gaze on the shaggy mass of hair that's burrowed into his side. "Daddy...who's Toofess?"

He didn't expect the pain to be so fresh and sharp when the name was said, but the stunning cold stab of anguish slices through his heart like a blade, taking his breath away. The name coming from the small boy's mouth has his eyes pricking with tears again, but he stares at the wood ceiling in his room unblinking with a lump in his throat.

_Stop, stop. Not in front of August. _

"He's...he's an old friend, Augie." His voice is thick and to force the words out actually hurts. "Someone Daddy used to know a long time ago."

There's a moment of silence as August pauses before responding, a silence that drapes over the two like a blanket. Hiccup suddenly feels ice cold, and he tugs the wool sheets up around them both.

"Oh," August eventually whispers. "He makes you sad. I sorry, Daddy."

Hiccup laughs humorlessly, and the tears almost ooze out of his eyes. He squeezes his boy tighter, rocking gently. "Nah. He doesn't make me sad. I just miss him sometimes, okay? You can miss people. Sometimes when...sometimes when you miss someone it hurts."

"Missing gives bad dweams?" August inquired timidly, clutching Hiccup's sleep shirt tightly in his fist.

"Sometimes, _petit guerrier. _Sometimes."

August blinks in his arms and Hiccup chuckles genuinely at the bewilderment on his son's face. "Wha- what pe tit grrir?" he asks, voice stumbling over the foreign words.

"It's French, August," he explains, smiling as the boy's brow wrinkles adorably. "It means little warrior. Because you're my little warrior, aren't you? You protect me from all the nasty nightmares?"

August's eyes shine like sparklers as they reflect the candle's liquid flame. "Yes," the boy said breathlessly, his voice quick. A small smile spreads across his face. "Sweep with you, 'tect you from eviw bad dweams! Pe tit grr!"

Hiccup laughs again at the silly pronunciation, feeling warmth pool in his stomach as his son stands up on top of his father's stomach, standing valiantly (or as valiantly as he can with his wobbly, thin legs) with a strong expression. "'ect Daddy from _evwyfing!"

—

"That's my little man!" Hiccup dives forward, sending his son tottling backwards and collapsing on his father's sheeted legs. He extends his fingers, making them claws and assuming the dreaded tickle position. August gasps and holds up his tiny little fists in defense.

"Eviw tickews!" he declares feverently. "Pe tit grr beat tickew hands!"

"Oh, really?" Hiccup teases, wagging his fingers and making them soar towards his son's side. The boy moves quickly, darting under the first assault and giving a little chop, striking Hiccup's left hand with the strength of a feather.

"Augh!" Hiccup cries, making his hand writhe and letting it collapse to the bed with a suitable dying noise. August giggles madly but tries to keep his face fearsome.

"One down, one go!" the boy attacks the other hand, latching on like a monkey.

"I'm under attack!" Hiccup calls, grinning like a fool but warping his voice into a fearful warble as wrenches his hand from the boy's grasp and he turns his hand on himself, tigging his own side and writhing, crying out for his little warrior to save him.

"PE TIT GRR!" August bellows. "I save you, Daddy!" The boy springs up and tackles the hand and his father, making Hiccup fall backwards against the wooden headboard. Laughing until he can't breathe, Hiccup makes the tickle monster die after getting a few good tickles in on

August's side, who flails and shrieks, batting the hand away with cries he thinks is so courageous but to Hiccup is almost impossibly adorable.

"You saved me from the evil tickle hands!" Hiccup hooted victoriously, scooping up his boy and giving him a fantastic hero hug. "You're my hero, little warrior!"

August beams, eyes glistening proudly. But then he shakes his head, his mossy green eyes widening. "No! You mightiest hewo! You best hero of all, Daddy. Always save me from bad dweams and bad fings." It would have been funny had August not been so serious in his statement, succeeding in making Hiccup's heart melt in his chest.

"That's right. I will never let anyone hurt you, August. If it's the last thing I do. Never, ever, ever. Nobody will ever hurt you, not so long as I'm here."

"Not..not ewen Owwcass?" Ah, the source of August's own nightmares.

_Should have never let him near Ulfric. That man's stories would scare anyone. _

"Outcasts would have to deal with me and my hammer," Hiccup said in a mighty voice and raising his arm like Thor himself. The longhaired boy gasps, and he realizes that his father is just like the god Thor. Strong and smart with a big hammer to beat all the bad men with their stupid swords and mean dumb faces.

Hiccup bent down to stare his son in the eyes, and takes the boy's small hands gently and presses them to his chest so he can feel the strong beats just beneath the cloth and skin. "Because you are my heart, August. You are my heart, and I love you more than the whole world."

"I wove- wo- I love you too, Daddy," August whispers. He leans forward and nuzzles against his father's chest and rubbing his cheek against the warm, soft sleep fabric. Soon his excited breathing slows in his tiny chest, and he relaxes under his father's soft fingers as they massage his back gently.

They stay that way for a while, until August's sleep groans snap Hiccup from his happy fuzzy fog.

_Both boys in bed tonight, _he thinks fondly, slowly easing his son off his chest and sliding the tiny boy next to him beneath the sheets. Blowing out the candle quickly, he douses the room with darkness and soon they're lost without light again; but it didn't seem nearly as oppressive with the warm, soft sound of his son breathing next to him. It's almost soothing, the security that overwhelms him now that his boy is safe in his arms. He doesn't think the nightmares will return tonight, and tomorrow he will need all the energy he can get. Even with all of his worries about his tribe and his past, a very important thing still remains.

Tomorrow is his son's fourth birthday.

Letting a protective arm fall over August, he brushes the downlike

bangs from his face and kisses the boy on the forehead. He doesn't stir and soon soft snores permeate the cold air, making the older Viking smile.

"Goodnight, _mon petit guerrier. _My boy."

_My miracle. _

Wrapping himself in the thick wool sheets to shield them both from the chill of the October night, he lets his all of the sudden very heavy head fall to his pillow. Hiccup closes his eyes and finally lets himself slip into warm, soft blackness.

****XXXXXXX****

****See? I told you- fluff! YAY FLUFF! I am falling in love with daddy!Hiccup, I mean, seriously. I wrote the part with** **_petit guerrier _****as a tribute to the original Hiccup from the books, who can not only speak Norse and "Roman", but is also fluent in French!****

****And because it was adorable and I wanted to use it.****

****Thanks so much for reading! Please review and tell me what you think about this fic so far!****

End
file.